

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
18 October 2001 (18.10.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/77081 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **C07D 233/06, 233/10** (74) Agent: **MURGITROYD & COMPANY, 373 Scotland Street, Glasgow G5 8QA (GB).**

(21) International Application Number: **PCT/GB01/01487**

(81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(22) International Filing Date: **5 April 2001 (05.04.2001)**

(84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

(25) Filing Language: **English**

Published:

— with international search report

(26) Publication Language: **English**

(30) Priority Data:
0008707.2 7 April 2000 (07.04.2000) GB

(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST [GB/GB]; University Road, Belfast BT7 1NN (GB).**

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **EARLE, Martyn, John [GB/GB]; 40A Inishowen Drive, Finaghy, Belfast BT10 0EU (GB). SEDDON, Kenneth, Richard [GB/GB]; "Tara", 145 Millisle Road, Donaghdee BT21 0LA (GB).**



WO 01/77081 A1



and their use as ionic liquids.

(I)

(57) Abstract: A process for the preparation of imidazolium carbenes of formula (I) wherein R₁ and R₂ which can be the same or different, are hydrogen or linear or branched hydrocarbyl groups comprising heating an imidazolium halide with a strong base under reduced pressure and separating the resultant products is described. Also described is a process for the preparation of salts of these imidazolium carbenes,

1 Imidazole Carbenes

2

3

4

5 This invention relates to a process for the synthesis of imidazole carbenes
6 and the use thereof for the synthesis of ionic liquids.

7 Carbenes are generally organic molecules which have a lone pair of
8 electrons on a carbon atom and which in turn renders them highly reactive. As a
9 result, carbenes are highly reactive intermediates in the synthesis of chemical
10 compounds. Carbenes, due to their highly reactive nature, are generally only
isolatable in the form of eg metal carbenoid species.

11 Numerous methods for the generation of imidazole carbenes have been
12 reported. Starting from an imidazolium halide, the use of systems such as sodium
13 hydride in ammonia or dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), sodium in ammonia, alkali
14 metals in tetrahydrofuran (THF), metal *t*-butoxides in THF or DMSO, etc. These
15 suffer from the disadvantage that very dry conditions and reagents have to be used,
16 difficult separations under strictly anhydrous conditions are involved, and the
reagents used can be expensive and inconvenient.

17 We have developed a simple procedure for the generation of the
18 imidazolium carbene in 90-95% yield from an imidazolium chloride: this does not
19 require solvents, filtrations, or lead to the production of noxious waste products.

20

21

22

1

2

According to the first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a process for the preparation of imidazolium carbenes of formula (I),

(I)



wherein R₁ and R₂, which can be the same or different, are hydrogen or linear or branched hydrocarbyl groups,
comprising heating an imidazolium halide with a strong base under reduced pressure and separating the resultant products.

The process is preferably carried out under vacuum. The resultant products can be separated using any known separation techniques such as distillation.

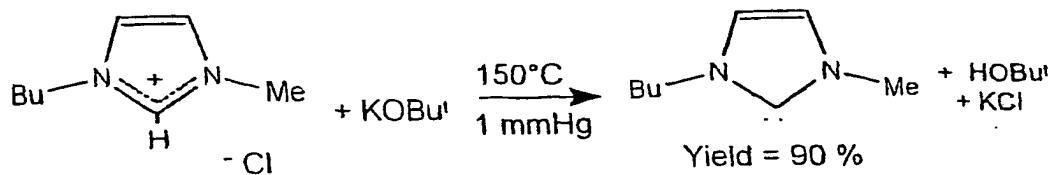
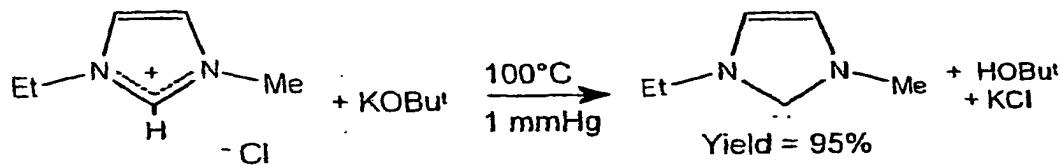
The imidazolium halide may suitably be a chloride, bromide or an iodide and is preferably a chloride. R₁ and R₂ are suitably alkyl, alkaryl, aryl or aralkyl groups, more preferably alkyl groups. These hydrocarbyl groups suitably have from 1-20 carbon atoms, preferably from 1-8 carbon atoms. Specifically these substituents may be methyl or ethyl groups.

5 The strong base heated with the imidazolium halide may be any of the conventionally known strong bases such as eg alkali metal alkoxides, sodium hydride, sodium amide (NaNH_2) and the like. The strong base is suitably an alkali metal alkoxide in which the alkoxide group has 1-4 carbon atoms and may be a straight or branched chain. Specific examples of these are the methoxide, the 10 ethoxide, the propoxide and the butoxide, especially the tertiary butoxide. Of the alkali metals in the alkoxide, potassium is preferred.

15 In one embodiment of the present invention, the process involves the distillation under vacuum of the carbene from a mixture of an imidazolium chloride and a commercially available metal alkoxide such as eg potassium *t*-butoxide. The commercial metal alkoxide need not be further purified before use. The by-products of this reaction, where an imidazolium chloride is heated with potassium *t*-butoxide, are potassium chloride and *t*-butanol (which can be recycled). The method is straightforward, relatively cheap, and does not involve the production of noxious waste products.

20 Two examples of the reaction are shown below in which the substituents on the imidazolium groups are represented by the following abbreviations:

Et	-	Ethyl
Bu	-	Butyl
Me	-	Methyl
Bu^t	-	Tertiary butyl
KOBu^t -		Potassium tertiary butoxide
HOBu^t -		Tertiary butanol



The two carbenes shown, which fume in moist air, are both colourless oils with a characteristic smell (freshly mown grass), of boiling point 90°C and 130°C at about 130 Pa (1 mm Hg) pressure, respectively. They appear to be thermally stable up to 200°C for short periods of time, and stable at room temperature for

5 several days (the mode of decomposition appears to be water-promoted disproportionation to a 2H-imidazoline and an oxidised species). However, they are extremely hygroscopic, reacting with moisture in the air to form the corresponding imidazolium hydroxide, itself being a novel ionic liquid.

10 Consequently, they must be handled under dinitrogen or in an inert atmosphere glove box. The reaction of forming carbene itself is carried out in the substantial absence of any solvents. However, once produced, to facilitate handling of the carbenes, it may be dissolved in solvents. Suitable solvents for the dissolution of carbenes are limited, but aromatic, aliphatic (alkanes) and ether solvents appear to be appropriate. Halogenated and ketonic solvents must not be used, especially

15 carbon tetrachloride, chloroform and primary alkyl halides, owing to a rapid exothermic transformation.

These carbenes can be used for conversion thereof to the corresponding imidazolium salts by a simple reaction with the acid form of the required anion. This reaction takes place according to the following equation;

20

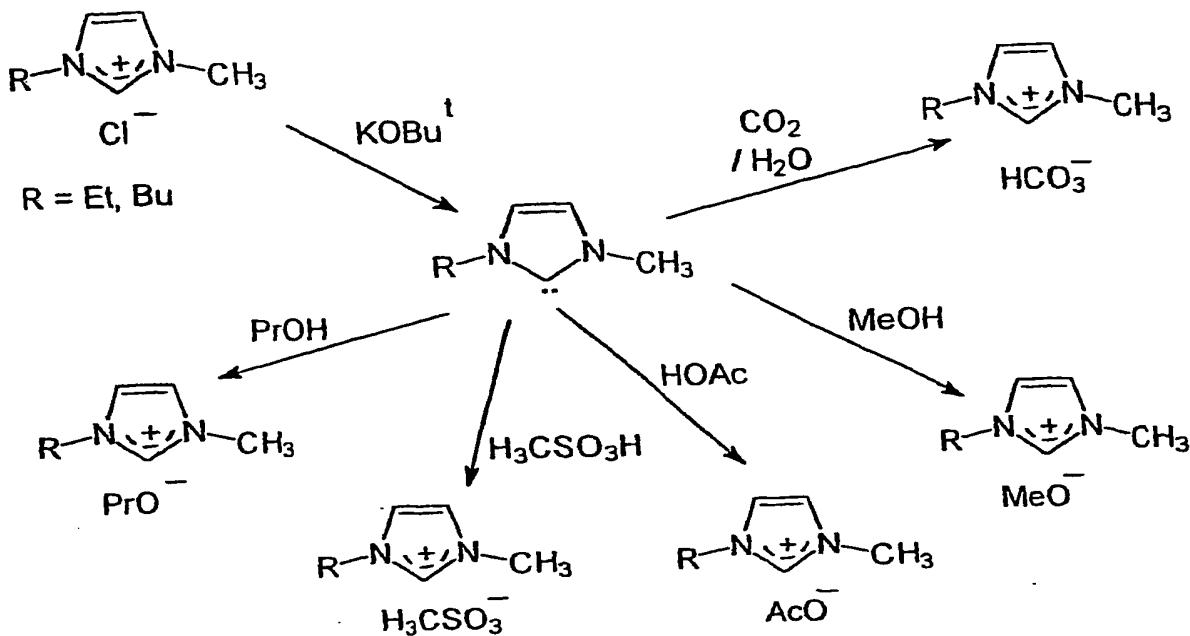


wherein R¹ and R² are as hereinbefore defined.

Thus, the present process can be used to generate imidazolium salts with a variety of anions such as those graphically represented in the equation below:

25

30



As can be seen from the above, the acid form of the anion can be any one of a vast variety of compounds including *inter alia* alcohols such as eg methanol or propanol, and acids such as eg carbonic acid, acetic acid or alkyl sulfonic acid

5 Imidazolium salts of this type are essential components of many ionic liquids which are used as catalysts or solvents for catalysts in chemical reactions such as eg dimerisation, oligomerisation and polymerisation of olefins. Ionic liquids are primarily salts or mixtures of salts which melt below, at or above room 10 temperature. Such salt mixtures include (alkyl) aluminium halides in combination with one or more of imidazolium halides, the latter being preferably substituted eg by alkyl groups. Examples of the substituted derivatives of the latter include one or more of 1-methyl-3-ethylimidazolium halide, 1-methyl-3-butylimidazolium halide, 1-ethyl-3-butylimidazolium halide and the like. These ionic liquids consist of 15 a mixture where the mole ratio of the (alkyl) aluminium halide to the imidazolium halide is usually > 1.0 but may be 1.0 or < 1.0. Ionic liquids may also be simple binary salts, such as 1-methyl-3-butylimidazolium hexafluorophosphate, 1-methyl-3-ethylimidazolium acetate and 1-methyl-3-butylimidazolium nitrate.

20 The advantage of making the imidazolium salts by the present process, ie by reaction of two neutral molecules, is that it generates ionic liquids which are not contaminated by unwanted halide ions or metal ions. In addition to providing a novel and convenient route to known ionic liquids, it also permits the generation of

1 novel ionic liquids, such as 1-methyl-3-alkylimidazolium alkoxides, 1-methyl-3-
2 alkylimidazolium hydrogencarbonates and the corresponding imidazolium
3 hydroxide which were hitherto unknown.

4

5

6

7 Thus according to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided an imidazolium
8 carbene of formula (I) as hereinbefore defined whenever prepared by the present invention.

9

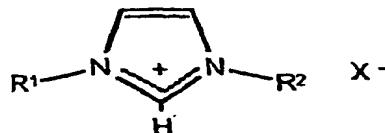
10 According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided preparation of
11 imidazolium salts of formula (II)

12

13

(II)

14



15

16

17

18

19

20 wherein R_1 and R_2 , which can be the same or
21 different, are hydrogen or linear or branched
22 hydrocarbyl groups and X^- is a cation,

23

24

comprising the reaction of an

imidazolium carbene of formula (I) as hereinbefore defined with an acid or alcohol.

25

26

27

According to a fourth aspect of the present invention, there is provided an imidazolium salt of
formula (II) as hereinbefore defined whenever prepared by the present invention.

28

29

30

31

32

According to a fifth aspect of the present invention, there is provided use of an imidazolium salt
of formula (II) as hereinbefore defined as an ionic liquid.

5 The present invention is further illustrated with reference to the following
 Examples:

Examples:

1. Preparation of Carbenes

1.1 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine

10 All manipulations were performed under a stream of dry dinitrogen or in a glove box. In a round-bottomed flask (50 cm³), 1-ethyl-3-methyl imidazolium chloride (8.7 g, 50 mmol) and a commercial sample of potassium t-butoxide (7.7 g, 75 mmol, unpurified, 95% ex Aldrich) were heated in a Kugelrohr apparatus at 125°C at about 130 Pa (1 mm Hg) pressure for 1 h. A colourless oil was collected
 15 and transferred to a clean round-bottomed flask (50 cm³). This was redistilled on the Kugelrohr apparatus to give 5.3 g of a colourless oil. NMR analysis showed this oil to be 1-ethyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine (95 % yield). The product has a tendency to rapidly turn orange on contact with the air. The carbene produced by this Example was characterised using ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectroscopy and the following peaks were identified:

¹ H NMR	7.21	1H	singlet	¹³ C NMR	208.5	C
	7.08	1H	singlet		117.5	CH
	4.03	2H	quartet		116.2	CH
	3.73	3H	singlet		42.5	CH ₂
25	1.38	3H	triplet		34.7	CH ₃
					14.6	CH ₃

1.2 1-Butyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine

30 The same procedure as in Section 1.2 above was used for making the analogous butyl carbene except that the reaction temperature and distillation temperature were slightly (ca. 30°C higher)

The carbene produced by this Examples was characterised using ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectroscopy and the following peaks were identified:

5	¹ H NMR	7.16	1H	singlet	¹³ C NMR	210.2	C
		7.02	1H	singlet		117.5	CH
		4.02	2H	quartet		116.7	CH
		3.68	3H	singlet		47.4	CH ₂
		1.78	2H	pentet		34.6	CH ₃
		1.38	2H	hextet		31.3	CH ₂
		0.90	3H	triplet		17.1	CH ₂
						10.9	CH ₃

2. Preparation of Imidazolium Salts:

10 The method depends upon the careful mixing of a stoichiometric amount of carbene with an acid or alcohol, or, alternatively, excess acid, if the excess acid is readily separable (eg carbonic acid).

2.1 1-Butyl-3-methylimidazolium hydrogencarbonate:

15 A mixture of 1-butyl-3-methylimidazolium chloride (4.37g, 25 mmol) and potassium t-butoxide (3.95g, 35 mmol) was placed in a 50 cm³ round bottomed flask in a glove box. The flask was transferred to a Kugelrohr apparatus and the mixture was heated at 150°C, at about 130 Pa (1 mm Hg) pressure. A colourless oil (1-butyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine) was collected. The reaction was adjudged to be complete after 30 minutes and the oil was immediately poured into a 500 cm³ round bottom flask containing de-ionised water (100 cm³) and dry ice (ca. 10g). The flask was agitated until the dry ice had evaporated and the water was evaporated on a rotary evaporator. Toluene (3 x 50 cm³) was added to the flask and removed on a rotary evaporator (this procedure was used to azeotropically remove water from the ionic liquid) and finally, the resultant viscous brown oil was heated to 50°C at 133.4 Pa (1 mm Hg) for 2 hours. Weight of product = 3.51g, yield = 70%. The same NMR spectroscopy as used previously to characterise the carbene was used to characterise the imidazolium salts. The results were as follows:

30	¹ H NMR	8.85	1H	singlet	¹³ C NMR	159.0	C (HCO ₃ ⁻)
		7.61	1H	singlet		135.7	CH
		7.57	1H	singlet		122.0	CH
		4.99		singlet (HOD)		120.6	CH
		4.31	2H	triplet		47.7	CH ₂
		4.02	3H	singlet		34.1	CH ₃
		1.95	2H	hextet		29.7	CH ₂
		1.42	2H	pentet		17.2	CH ₂

1.03 3H triplet

11.2 CH₃Solvent = D₂OIR (NaCl plate): ν = 1666 cm⁻¹ C=O ν = 3600-2350 cm⁻¹ O-H

5 Empirical solubilities:

Soluble: water, methanol, ethanol

Partially soluble: acetone

Insoluble: ethyl acetate, diethyl ether

2.2 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium methoxide:

10 A mixture of 1-ethyl-3-methyl imidazolium chloride (3.66g, 25 mmol) and potassium t-butoxide (3.96g, 35 mmol) was placed in a 50 cm³ round bottomed flask in a glove box. The flask was transferred to a Kugelrohr apparatus and the mixture was heated at 140°C, at about 130 Pa (1 mm Hg) pressure. A colourless oil (1-ethyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine) was collected. The reaction was adjudged
 15 to be complete after 30 minutes and the apparatus was repressurised with dry nitrogen. Anhydrous methanol (1.0 cm³, 27 mmol) was added to the carbene by syringe. Excess methanol was removed by reconnecting to the vacuum line (1 mm Hg) and rotating the reaction vessel for 1 hour. The NMR spectra were recorded neat, using an acetone-d⁶ external lock. Yield estimated at 85-90% (based on

20 NMR)

	¹ H NMR	8.99	1H	singlet (broad)	¹³ C NMR	190.2	CH	(broad)
		7.56	1H	singlet		118.4	CH	
		7.45	1H	singlet		116.4	CH	
		4.38	2H	quartet		45.1	CH ₂	
25		4.02	3H	singlet		42.3	CH ₃	
		3.66	3H	singlet		34.0	CH ₃	
		1.63	3H	triplet		14.0	CH ₃	

Note: The product is extremely hygroscopic and decomposes slowly at room temperature. This decomposition appears to be water catalysed.

30 2.3 1-Butyl-3-methylimidazolium propoxide:

1-Butyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine (2.00 g, 16.1 mmol) was prepared as in Section 2.1 above. This was cautiously added to n-propanol (0.97g, 16.1 mmol) by pipette in a glove box. The NMR spectra were recorded neat, using an acetone-d⁶ external lock. Yield estimated at 95% (based on NMR)

10

5	¹ H NMR	8.92	1H	singlet (broad)	¹³ C NMR	190.1	CH	(broad)
		7.46	1H	singlet		118.2	CH	
		7.41	1H	singlet		117.3	CH	
		4.33	2H	triplet		59.8	CH ₂	
		4.02	3H	singlet		47.2	CH ₂	
		3.86	2H	triplet		34.0	CH ₃	
		2.10	2H	pentet		30.9	CH ₃	
		1.86	2H	hexet		29.0	CH ₂	
		1.60	2H	hexet		24.3	CH ₂	
		1.20	3H	triplet		10.8	CH ₃	
		1.19	3H	triplet		8.0	CH ₃	

Note: The product is extremely hygroscopic and decomposes very slowly at room temperature. This decomposition appears to be water catalysed. It appears to be significantly more stable than 1-ethyl-3-methylimidazolium methoxide.

15 2.4 1-Butyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate:

1-Butyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine (2.00 g, 16.1 mmol) was prepared as in Section 2.1 above. This was cautiously added to glacial acetic acid (0.97g, 16.1 mmol) by pipette in a glove box over a 15 minute period. The NMR spectra were recorded neat, using an acetone-d⁶ external lock. Yield estimated at 95% (based on NMR).

20	¹ H NMR	10.61	1H	singlet	¹³ C NMR	172.1	C	
		8.45	1H	singlet		136.3	CH	
		8.32	1H	singlet		121.6	CH	
		4.31	2H	triplet		120.5	CH	
		4.02	3H	singlet		46.0	CH ₂	
		1.72	2H	pentet		32.8	CH ₃	
		1.70	3H	singet		29.6	CH ₂	
		1.15	2H	hexet		28.6	CH ₃	
		0.72	3H	triplet		22.2	CH ₂	
						10.4	CH ₃	

30

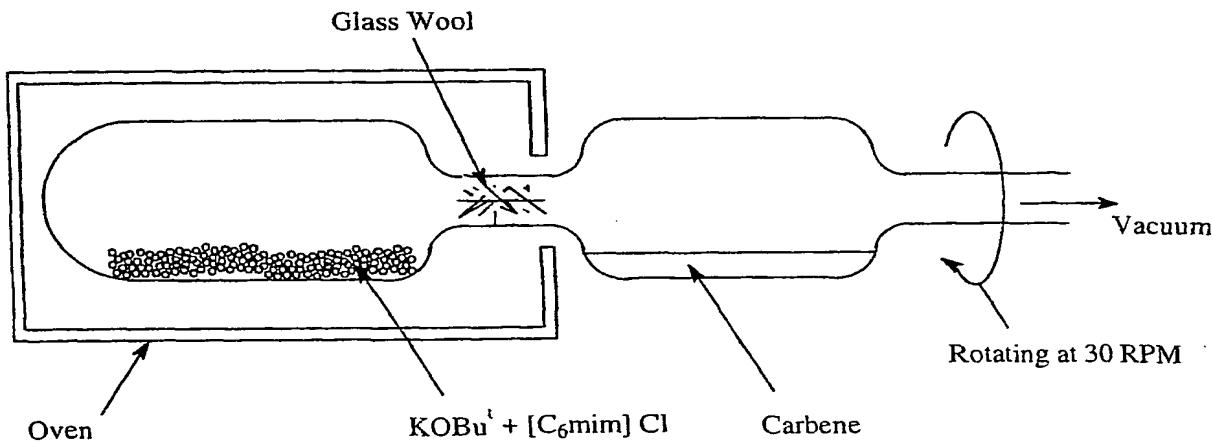
35

The following are further non-limiting examples;

1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolylidine.

1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolium chloride (10.0 g) was placed in a 100 cm³ Kugelrohr flask and connected to a Kugelrohr apparatus (Fig. 1,2). This was heated at 100 °C for 1 hour at 1 mmHg pressure, then cooled to room temperature. The flask was transferred to a dry glove box and potassium *tert*-butoxide (10.0 g) was added to the 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolium chloride. The apparatus was reassembled and heated at 160 °C for 2 hours. During this period, 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolylidine distilled into the receiving flask and the *tert*-butanol condensed into a liquid nitrogen trap connected to the vacuum pump. The orange coloured 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolylidine was analysed by ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectroscopy. The crude product was redistilled in the Kugelrohr apparatus (bp = 160°C at 1 mmHg) to give an extremely moisture sensitive colorless oil (6.5 g, 79 %); ¹H (300 MHz, neat, external TMS reference) 6.97 (1H, s), 6.92 (1H, s), 3.94 (2H, q, J = 7.3 Hz), 3.62 (3H, s), 1.72 (2H, m), 1.26 (6H, m), 0.85 (3H, t, J = 7.3 Hz); ¹³C NMR δ C (75 MHz, neat, external TMS reference) 209.6 (C), 119.6 (CH), 118.5 (CH), 49.9 (CH₂), 35.7 (CH₃), 31.5 (CH₂), 31.3 (CH₂), 31.1 (CH₂), 22.1 (CH₂), 13.4 (CH₃).

Figure 1: the apparatus for the synthesis of imidazolium carbenes.



1-Hexyl-3-methylimidazolium hydrogen carbonate

Solid carbon dioxide (dry ice) (ca. 25 g) was added to distilled water (100 g), with stirring from a magnetic stirring flea in a 500 cm³ beaker, in a fume hood. 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolylidine (6.0 g, 36.1 mmol) was added to the water and carbon dioxide mixture. The mixture was allowed to warm to room temperature, and was washed with dichloromethane (3 x 25 cm³). The water was evaporated on a rotary evaporator (making sure the temperature did not exceed 60 °C) and the 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolium hydrogen carbonate was dried under vacuum (1 mmHg) for 4 hours at 60 °C. This gave 7.8 g (94 %) of a straw coloured viscous liquid. δ H (300 MHz, D₂O, TMS reference) 8.28 (1H, s, D₂O exchangeable) 7.43 (1H, s), 7.33 (1H, s), 4.78 (1H, s), 4.04 (2H, q, J = 7.3 Hz), 3.77 (3H, s), 1.73 (2H, m), 1.32 (6H, m), 0.71 (3H, t, J = 7.3 Hz); δ C (75 MHz, D₂O, TMS reference) 161.3 (C), 135.8 (CH, D₂O exchangeable), 123.8 (CH), 122.5 (CH), 49.8 (CH₂), 35.9 (CH₃), 30.6 (CH₂), 29.5 (CH₂), 25.3 (CH₂), 22.1 (CH₂), 13.6 (CH₃).

This salt could be converted to other 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolium salts (or ionic liquids) by reaction with the acid form of the desired anion in water, followed by evaporation of the water.

1-Octyl-3-methylimidazolylidine.

1-Octyl-3-methylimidazolium chloride (5.0 g, 21.7 mmol) was placed in a 50 cm³ Kugelrohr flask and connected to a Kugelrohr apparatus (Fig 1). This was heated at 100 °C for 1 hour at 1 mmHg pressure, then cooled to room temperature. The flask was transferred to a dry glove box and potassium *tert*-butoxide (5.0 g, excess) was added to the 1-octyl-3-methylimidazolium chloride. The apparatus was reassembled and heated at 200 °C for 1 hour. During this period, 1-octyl-3-methylimidazolylidine distilled into the receiving flask and the *tert*-butanol condensed into a liquid nitrogen trap connected to the vacuum pump. The crude product was redistilled in the Kugelrohr apparatus (bp = 190-200 °C at 1 mmHg) to give an extremely moisture sensitive oil (2.87 g, 68 %). The yellow coloured 1-octyl-3-methylimidazolylidine solidified on standing was immediately used in further reactions.

1-Octyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate

1-Octyl-3-methylimidazol-2-ylidine (2.00 g, 16.1 mmol) prepared above, was cautiously added to glacial acetic acid (0.97g, 16.1 mmol) by pipette in a glove box over a 15 minute period with stirring from a magnetic stirrer flea. The ionic liquid formed was used unpurified. NMR data: δ H (300 MHz, neat, external TMS reference) 10.61 (1H, s), 8.45 (1H, s), 8.32 (1H, s), 4.31 (3H, t), 4.02, (3H, s), 1.72 (2H, m), 1.70 (2H, s), 1.15 (10H, m), 0.72 (3H, t, J = 7.2 Hz); δ C (75 MHz, neat, external TMS reference) 172.1 (C), 136.3 (CH), 121.6 (CH), 120.5 (CH), 46.0 (CH₂), 32.8 (CH₃), 29.6 (5 x CH₂), 28.6 (CH₃), 22.2 (CH₂), 10.4 (CH₂).

1 Claims

2

3 1. A process for the preparation of imidazolium
4 carbenes of formula (I),

5



10

11 wherein R₁ and R₂, which can be the same or
12 different, are hydrogen or linear or branched
13 hydrocarbyl groups,
14 comprising heating an imidazolium halide with a
15 strong base under reduced pressure and
16 separating the resultant products.

17

18 2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the
19 separation involves distillation with the
20 imidazolium carbene being present in the
21 distillate.

22

23 3. A process according to claim 1 or Claim 2
24 wherein the imidazolium halide is an
25 imidazolium chloride.

28

27 4. A process according to any one of the preceding
28 Claims wherein R₁ and/or R₂ are C₁₋₂₀ alkyl,
29 alkaryl, aryl or alalkyl groups.

30

31 5. A process according to Claim 4 wherein R₁
32 and/or R₂ are C₁₋₈ alkyl groups.

1

2 6. A process according to Claim 5 wherein R₁
3 and/or R₂ are methyl or ethyl groups.

4

5 7. A process according to any one of the preceding
6 claims wherein the strong base is a sodium
7 hydride or sodium amide.

8

9 8. A process according to any one of Claims 1-6
10 wherein the strong base is an alkali metal
11 alkoxide.

12

13 9. A process according to Claim 8 wherein the
14 alkoxide is a C₁₋₄ alkoxide.

15

16 10. A process according to Claim 9 wherein the
17 alkoxide is tertiary butoxide.

18

19 11. A process according to any one of Claims 8-10
20 wherein the alkali metal is potassium.

21

22 12. A process according to any one of Claims 1 to
23 11 carried out wholly or substantially in the
24 absence of a solvent.

25

26 13. An imidazolium carbene whenever prepared by a
27 process according to any one of Claims 1 to 12.

28

29

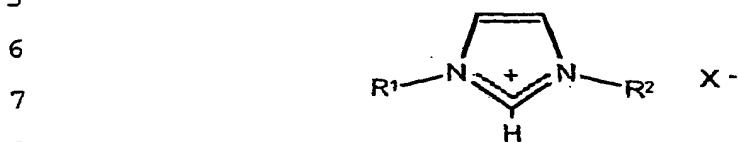
30

31

32

1
2 14. A process for the preparation of an imidazolium
3 salt of formula (II)

4
5 (II)



9
10
11 wherein R_1 and R_2 , which can be the same or
12 different, are hydrogen or linear or branched
13 hydrocarbyl groups and X^- is a cation,
14 in which an imidazolium carbene of formula (I)
15 as defined in Claim 1 is reacted with an acid
16 or alcohol.

17
18 15. A process according to Claim 14 wherein R_1 and
19 R_2 are as defined in any one of Claims 4-6.

20
21 16. An imidazolium salt wherever prepared by a
22 process according to any one of Claims 14 or
23 15.

24
25 17. Use of an imidazolium salt as defined in Claim
26 14 as an ionic liquid.

27
28 18. Use of an imidazolium salt according to Claim 17
29 additionally comprising one or more aluminium
30 halides or alkyl aluminium halides.

- 1 19. Use of an imidazolium salt according to Claim
- 2 17 or Claim 18 as a catalyst.
- 3
- 4 20. Use of an imidazolium salt according to Claim
- 5 17 or Claim 18 as a solvent.
- 6
- 7 21. Use of an imidazolium salt according to any one
- 8 of Claims 17-20 in the catalysis of olefin
- 9 dimerisation, oligomerisation or
- 10 polymerisation.
- 11
- 12 22. A 1-methyl-3-alkylimidazolium alkoxide.
- 13
- 14 23. A 1-methyl-3-alkylimidazolium
- 15 hydrogencarbonate.
- 16
- 17 24. A 1-methyl-3-alkylimidazolium hydroxide.
- 18
- 19 25. Use of a compound as defined in any one of
- 20 Claims 22, 23 or 24 as an ionic liquid.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/GB 01/01487A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 C07D233/06 C07D233/10

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 C07D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

CHEM ABS Data, EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, BEILSTEIN Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
E	WO 01 40146 A (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST, UK) 7 June 2001 (2001-06-07) the whole document	1-25
P, X	CARMICHAEL, ADRIAN J. ET AL: "Molecular layering and local order in thin films of 1-alkyl-3- methylimidazolium ionic liquids using X-ray reflectivity" MOL. PHYS. (2001), 99(10), 795-800 , XP001008042 the whole document	16, 17, 19-21



Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

T later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

X document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

Y document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

g document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 July 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

31/07/2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Scruton-Evans, I

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 01/01487

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
P,X	CARMICHAEL, ADRIAN J. ET AL: "Polarity study of some 1-alkyl-3-methylimidazolium ambient-temperature ionic liquids with the solvatochromic dye, Nile Red" J. PHYS. ORG. CHEM. (2000), 13(10), 591-595 , XP001008060 the whole document	16,17, 19-21
P,X	HAMILL, JENNIFER T. ET AL: "Comment on the preparation of the ionic liquid 1-ethyl-3-methylimidazolium ethanoate: a unique monomeric, homoleptic pentacoordinate lead ethanoate complex" CHEM. COMMUN. (CAMBRIDGE) (2000), (19), 1929-1930 , XP001007296 the whole document	16
P,X	DENK M K ET AL: "Synthesis and reactivity of subvalent compounds - Part 10. Fast deuterium labeling and the basicity of stable diamino carbenes (imidazole-2-ylidenes)" JOURNAL OF ORGANOMETALLIC CHEMISTRY, ELSEVIER-SEQUOIA S.A. LAUSANNE,CH, vol. 608, no. 1-2, 25 August 2000 (2000-08-25), pages 122-125, XP004227388 ISSN: 0022-328X see compound 1	13
P,X	JAFARPOUR L ET AL: "A sterically demanding nucleophilic carbene: 1,3-bis(2,6-diisopropylphenyl)imidazol-2-ylidene). Thermochemistry and catalytic application in olefin metathesis" JOURNAL OF ORGANOMETALLIC CHEMISTRY, ELSEVIER-SEQUOIA S.A. LAUSANNE,CH, vol. 606, no. 1, 14 July 2000 (2000-07-14), pages 49-54, XP004212112 ISSN: 0022-328X see scheme 1	13,16
P,Y		1-25
X	G.MAIER: "2H-Imidazol-2-ylidene: New insights from a Matrix-Spectroscopic Study" CHEM EUR J, vol. 5, no. 5, 1999, pages 1590-1597, XP002172152 the whole document	12
		-/-

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/GB 01/01487

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	WO 96 18459 A (BP CHEM INT LTD ; ELLIS BRIAN (GB)) 20 June 1996 (1996-06-20) the whole document	1-25
X		16
A	WO 98 27064 A (GOERLICH JENS ROBERT ; ARDUENGO ANTHONY JOSEPH III (US); DU PONT (U) 25 June 1998 (1998-06-25) the whole document	1-25
A	KUHN N ET AL: "SYNTHESIS OF IMIDAZOL-2-YLIDENES BY REDUCTION OF IMIDAZOLE-2(3H)-THIONES" SYNTHESIS, DE, GEORG THIEME VERLAG. STUTTGART, no. 6, 1 June 1993 (1993-06-01), pages 561-562, XP002060701 ISSN: 0039-7881 the whole document	1-25
X	ARDUENGO A J ET AL: "ELECTRONIC STABILIZATION OF NUCLEOPHILIC CARBENES" JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY, US, AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY, WASHINGTON, DC, vol. 114, no. 4, 1 July 1992 (1992-07-01), pages 5530-5534, XP002032799 ISSN: 0002-7863 see compounds 4,7,8,9 and processes for their preparation	12
Y		1-12

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/IB 01/01487

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
WO 0140146 46 A		NONE			
WO 9618459 A	20-06-1996	AU	3986495 A	03-07-1996	
		CA	2182894 A	20-06-1996	
		CN	1140422 A	15-01-1997	
		EP	0743878 A	27-11-1996	
		FI	963134 A	09-08-1996	
		JP	9509888 T	07-10-1997	
		NO	963294 A	07-08-1996	
		ZA	9510411 A	09-06-1997	
WO 9827064 A	25-06-1998	AU	5530998 A	15-07-1998	

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)